

Testimony of
Mr. David A. Bittenbender
of
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before the
House Government Reform Committee

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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, we appreciate the opportunity to appear here today. I am here on behalf of Computer Sciences Corporation where I work as vice president of Federal Network Services. I also am here as a former Chairman of the FTS 2001 Interagency Management Council and as a former government telecommunications executive.

I personally feel very strongly about the effective use of communications and information technologies in contributing to a more responsible and responsive government.

Mr. Chairman, you set the vision for such a government at a breakfast we attended just a few months ago. There, you spoke of the need for a communications infrastructure, one that meets new and demanding national security, and economic competitiveness demands imposed on an effective 21st century government. Yours is a strong and important vision and message, and I applaud you for it.

For a myriad of reasons your vision will not be easy to achieve. Important and substantial initiatives rarely are. GSA though, is to be commended for its attempt to structure so major a procurement in such turbulent times, internal to its organization and across government as well.

Networx can and should be the flagship initiative for government to dramatically improve its ability to share information. It has that potential.

To achieve that potential, the procurement should move from its current position as essentially an enhanced schedule of stovepipe commodity services, to a horizontally defined standards-based initiative that can evolve with the rapid and dramatically changing communications industry.

Leaders in the communications industry today may not be the leaders of tomorrow. Twenty-five years ago when the GSA first considered replacing the original FTS

contract there was only one service provider. At the time of the FTS2000 procurement in 1988 there were three providers. Today, there are dozens, many offering services that didn't exist in 1988, and the original service provider of twenty-five years ago will likely not exist when Networx is awarded. This trend will continue apace, and the government must develop procurement structures that adapt to this environment.

We do not believe that the Networx procurement in its present form encourages the objective of a government-wide, or even system-wide, integration of communications services. This is not so much the fault of GSA, as it is the reality the GSA faces in its customer market. Like it or not, stovepipe culture in government and the telecommunications industry is strong, yet this culture must be addressed in terms of communications infrastructure, if we as a government are to truly be able to share information across boundaries and jurisdictions.

We believe Networx suffers from some of the same weaknesses as its predecessors. Although the procurement mandates a standards-based service solution, and specifies interoperability, many aspects of service provisioning, operation and management make seamless interoperability among the Networx service vendors impracticable, and not readily supported by the vendors themselves.

In addition, the requirements of the Enterprise component of the procurement, which is essentially a subset of the Universal requirements, presents a significant barrier to innovation, and to the entrance of small and other businesses who could offer niche services with significant potential value to the government.

The Universal component, which is largely commodity services, can, and probably should, move forward given the impending expiration of existing contracts.

However, we believe the government would be better served through restructuring the Enterprise component as a statement of objectives, rather than a statement of requirements. It is the Enterprise procurement that offers the greatest potential to the government for innovation, contract flexibility and sound infrastructure management over the duration of Networx.

CSC supports a delay in the issuance of the Networx RFP, or certainly the Enterprise component, so as to allow its careful and adequate consideration by GSA, Congress and this Committee in particular, and by the broader government and industry. Networx is moving forward with a rapidly evolving realization at senior levels of the executive branch and Congress – a realization fueled by this committee – that our infrastructure today is not adequate. A brief time out might be in order.

Mr. Chairman, once again I thank you for this opportunity. I look forward to any questions you might have and to working with you and your staff in any appropriate manner.